

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LUSAKA 01852 301558Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5994
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
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AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE IMMEDIATE
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USUN NEW YORK 1360

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 1852

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PDEV RH UK US XF NI
SUBJ: POSSIBLE NIGERIAN SUPPORT FOR EXCLUSIVE RECOGNITION
OF PATRIOTIC FRONT AT OAU CONFERENCE

REF: LIBREVILLE 1632 (NOTAL); STATE 141735

1. AS THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL, INITIAL OAU CONSIDERATION OF EXCLUSIVE RECOGNITION OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT OCCURRED IN LUSAKA AT A MEETING OF THE OAU LIBERATION COMMITTEE IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR. THE ULTIMATE RESOLUTION OF THE HEATED DEBATE WAS BASED ALMOST ENTIRELY ON NIGERIAN INITIATIVES. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT AGAIN IN LIBREVILLE THE NIGERIANS WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN RESOLVING THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE. WE ARE THEREFORE CONCERNED AT THE REPORT CONTAINED LIBREVILLE REFTEL THAT THE NIGERIANS MAY RELUCTANTLY SUPPORT EXCLUSIVE RECOGNITION OF THE PF BY THE OAU. WHILE WE AGREED WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION CONTAINED REF STATE TEL THAT WE SHOULD NOT JOIN WITH THE BRITISH IN A
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PAGE 02 LUSAKA 01852 301558Z

COORDINATED CAMPAIGN IN OAU CAPITALS AGAINST EXCLUSIVE RECOGNITION OF THE PF, WE BELIEVE THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR GOING BACK TO HARRIMAN WITH A LITTLE MORE OF OUR THINKING OF WHY EXCLUSIVE RECOGNITION COULD DO GREAT DAMAGE TO THE PRESENT NEGOTIATING EFFORT IN WHICH WE ARE ENGAGED.

2. FROM THE OWEN-NKOMO DISCUSSIONS IN LONDON JUNE 15-16 AND

FROM EMBASSY OFFICER CONVERSATIONS WITH ZAPU OFFICIALS IN LUSAKA OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS, IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT THE PF WILL MAKE A MAJOR ISSUE OVER ITS CLAIM TO CONTROL THE CARETAKER GOVERNMENT. NKOMO WILL TRY TO DO THIS THROUGH INSISTING ON EXCLUSIVE RECOGNITION OF THE PF'S ARMED FORCES AS THE GUARDIAN OF LAW AND ORDER DURING THAT PERIOD. HE MAY ALSO TRY TO OBTAIN OTHER MEANS OF CONTROLLING THE CARETAKER GOVERNMENT. AN ELECTION WHICH TOOK PLACE UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES COULD HARDLY BE CONSIDERED AN IMPARTIAL ONE AND IT IS THEREFORE LIKELY THAT NOT ONLY SMITH BUT SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA WOULD REFUSE TO AGREE TO ANY SETTLEMENT OF THIS KIND. EXCLUSIVE RECOGNITION BY THE OAU WOULD GREATLY STRENGTHEN NKOMO'S HAND IN INSISTING ON SUCH INFLUENCE OVER A CARETAKER REGIME. HE WOULD CITE THE OAU AS HAVING RECOGNIZED THE PF TO BE THE EXCLUSIVE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE OF ZIMBABWE AS HIS CLAIM TO OVERSEE THE ELECTION PROCESS.

3. THE LIBREVILLE CONFERENCE WILL CERTAINLY HAVE ANGOLA AND THE NEED TO AVOID CONTRIBUTING TO A CIVIL WAR ON THEIR MINDS WHEN THEY CONSIDER RHODESIA. AN ARBITRARY RECOGNITION OF ONE NATIONALIST ELEMENT WHICH WOULD LEAD TO AN ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE IT FROM THE OUTSIDE COULD CONTRIBUTE TO SUCH A WAR AS EASILY AS IT COULD AVOID IT. WITHHOLDING EXCLUSIVE RECOGNITION WITHOUT TAKING SIDES AND A DEMOCRATIC ELECTION UNDER IMPARTIAL ADMINISTRATION, HOWEVER, MIGHT BE THE BEST WAY TO AVOID IT. IN OUR CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 LUSAKA 01852 301558Z

VIEW IT IS ONE THING FOR THE OAU TO RECOGNIZE THE PF AS THE CHANNEL OF SUPPORT FOR THE WAR EFFORT AGAINST THE SMITH REGIME, BUT IT IS QUITE ANOTHER FOR IT TO IMBUE THE FRONT WITH AUTHORITY WHICH COULD BE EXTENDED TO COVER THE ELECTION PROCESS. FRONTLINE LEADERS INCLUDING KAUNDA HAVE REPEATEDLY STATED THAT THEY BELIEVE THE FUTURE LEADERS OF ZIMBABWE SHOULD BE CHOSEN IN A DEMOCRATIC ELECTION. IF THAT STATEMENT IS TO HAVE ANY MEANING, EXCLUSIVE RECOGNITION OF THE PF MUST BE LIMITED IN SOME WAY TO EXCLUDE THE ELECTION PROCESS.

4. SUGGEST THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER INSTRUCTING AMBASSADOR STEIGMAN TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER FURTHER WITH AMBASSADOR HARRIMAN.
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